Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry

Developing Strategies for Positive Change on your Campus and in your Community

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UPR Participatory Research Project Focus Statement

“The idea is for the participatory projects to involve active students from low income groups and other stakeholders in the process of identifying the obstacles to access and success and developing effective ways to mitigate or eliminate those obstacles.”
Workshop Objectives

• To build a community of scholars interested in applying action research to address issues of local concern
• To understand the definitions and core values of action research and appreciative inquiry
• To be able to locate different approaches to action research within the broader spectrum of related practices
• To develop a repertoire of methods that can be used in conducting action research

• To identify a potential action research project for each participating UPR campus to address the overall workshop focus statement

• To develop strategies for designing and implementing this AR project
• To understand the ethical issues associated with conducting AR and the requirements of university Internal Review Boards as they relate to AR.
• To understand the process and potential sites for publication of AR projects
• To connect workshop participants to the variety of AR organizations around the world
Basic Terminology

Action Research
Participatory Research
Participatory Action Research
Community-based Participatory Research
Educational Action Research
Classroom-based Participatory Research
Locating myself as a Participatory Action Researcher
Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, and with the world, and with each other.

Paulo Freire
If real democracy is to be achieved, it will start with grassroots action. As diverse people respond to local circumstances, they must build broader movements which confront and change the policies and structures which dominate our lives. The power of the Highlander experience is the strength that grows within the souls of people, working together, as they analyze and confirm their own experiences and draw upon their understanding to contribute to fundamental change.

Highlander Mission Statement
Defining Action Research
Reason and Bradbury define Action Research as:

“...a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment.”
“It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities”
(Reason and Bradbury, 2001, 1).
Participatory action research combines aspects of popular education, community-based research, and action for social change. Emphasizing collaboration within marginalized or oppressed communities, participatory action research works to address the underlying causes of inequality while at the same time focusing on finding solutions to specific community concerns. (Williams and Brydon-Miller, 2004, 245)
Action Research Process
Figure 6.1. Participatory Action Research process.
Iterative Cycles of Action Research
Progressive Problem Solving with Action Research

Source: Center for Collaborative Action Research, Pepperdine University
Aspects of Effective Participation

- Enables significant levels of active involvement
- Enables people to perform significant tasks
- Provides support for people as they learn to act for themselves
- Encourages plans and activities that people are able to accomplish themselves
- Deals personally with people rather than with their representatives or agents
Core Values of Action Research
“…a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action”

(Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire, 2003, p. 15)
Summary of Shared Values of Action Research

• open and transparent participation,
• respect for people’s knowledge,
• democratic and non-hierarchical practices,
• and positive and sustainable social change.
Translating the Ethics of PAR into practice

• Center yourself within a set of values
• Know your community setting and participants
• Identify aspects and levels of power among stakeholders
• Examine the relationships among stakeholders
• Anticipate ethical issues
• Be prepared to be surprised
Exemplars of Action Research Projects
ग्राम उन्मेष अनुसंधान
आपकी
हार्दिक स्वागत करता है।
Selected Participatory Action Research Methods

- Idea Gallery
- Fishbone Diagrams
- Asset Mapping
- Photovoice
Idea Gallery

This is a strategy for generating and elaborating on ideas for action research projects. Write your idea at the top of the sheet and post this on the wall. Other members of the group then visit the “gallery” and provide feedback by offering resources, raising questions, suggesting new directions, etc. It’s helpful to identify your comments so you can provide clarification.
Fishbone Diagrams
Long lines at the post office at 5:00 pm:

- Long lines at the post office for mailing
- Clerks do time-consuming services
- Clerk out of break room
- Clerk requires more time

Cause-Effect (Fishbone) Diagram

J. Smith
February 25, 2010
• Draw a fish skeleton
• Make the head of the fish the issue or problem you’re interested in investigating
• Label the bones with factors that you see contributing to the issue or problem
• Choose a particular contributing factor and make this the head of a new fish…
• What have you learned about the problem and the broader context within which it exists?

• What might be a good starting place for action?
Appreciative Inquiry
If we devote our attention to what is wrong with organizations and communities, we lose the ability to see and understand what gives life to organizations and to discover ways to sustain and enhance that life-giving potential (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001, p. 189).
The Assets of a Community: Individuals, Organizations, and Institutions

“Each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future.”

(Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 6)
Asset-Mapping

- Thinking about the context within which your issue takes place, whether that’s an organization, a school, or a neighborhood, what assets does that setting have that might be useful in addressing the issue? This might include physical, social, cultural, or economic resources.

- Create a visual representation or map that locates these resources or assets within your setting.
• How do you understand the setting differently when focusing on its assets?

• How might these assets be used to address problems within the setting?
Photovoice

• Working with community partners, identify a research question or issue you want to investigate.
• Give each participant a camera with the assignment to take photographs that in some way illustrate the issue.
• After developing the photographs, ask participants to choose an image or images that best illustrate the issue.
• First individually and then collectively interpret the image. What insights do you gain about the issue through reflection on the image?

• Photovoice can also be used as a tool for disseminating research findings and connecting with broader community.
UNIVERSIDAD
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Photovoice and Appreciative Inquiry
• “… images that in your mind represent positive aspects of your campus and the surrounding community. What are beautiful places? Important historical spots? Objects you think are especially significant or in some way meaningful to you or others on campus or in the community? People who make a special contribution?... Anything you think shows something or someone important to your campus and community”. 
Framing an Action Research Project
Action Research Key Questions

Problem: What is the problem requiring investigation? What is my central research issue?
Participants: Who are the stakeholders? Which people are affected by or have an effect on the issue being studied? Students? Teachers? Administrators? Parents or other family members? Others?
Place: Where will the research take place? Which sites or settings will be included in the study? Classrooms? Other academic spaces? Residence halls? Offices? Other locations?
Time: When will the research begin? How long might it take?
Data gathering processes: How will information be collected? Interviews? Surveys? Observations? Archival data? Focus groups? Photography? Theater productions? Other? Who will collect the data? How will they be trained to perform data collection? What skills and experience will they gain through the process?
Data analysis and dissemination: How will the data be analyzed? Who will be involved in the process? How will the data be disseminated? Who gets credit? How will the information collected be used to directly benefit the participants? How will it contribute to our understanding of the issue?

Additional Resources
Final Reflection

Are there any additional questions, comments, or thoughts about participatory action research you’d like to raise?
Thank you.
Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions or thoughts.

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